

THAMES VALLEY BRANCH
Newsletter 85 October 2014

Chairman: Richard Stow,
54 Folly Bridge Court, Shirelake Close,
Oxford, OX1 1SW Tel: 01865 723646

Secretary: Andrew McCallum,
38 Lapsley Drive, Banbury,
OX16 1EW Tel: 01295 272606
thamesvalley@railfuture.org.uk

[twitter.com/@RailfutureTV](https://twitter.com/RailfutureTV)

Next members' meeting: Saturday 22nd November 2014 at 11.00 at The New Hope Centre, 95 York Road, Reading, RG1 8DU

Our guest speaker will be George Bathurst of the Windsor Link Railway who will address us about their plans. (See <http://windsorlink.co.uk/>)

This will be a joint meeting with the London & South East Branch.

The venue is a 7-8 minute walk from Reading Station. Leave by the new northern entrance beyond platform 15 and from Trooper Potts Way turn left into Vastern Road (dual carriageway). Just before the roundabout cross Vastern Road at the pedestrian crossing. Continue past the roundabout into Caversham Road and cross to the other side at the pedestrian crossing just before the Rainbow Lodge Hotel. York Road is on the left beside the Vespa dealer. You will then see the New Hope Centre on the right on the corner of Newport Road. We shall be on the first floor (lift available).

Update on visit to the Network Rail Thames Valley Signalling Centre at Didcot.

The visit to Didcot Signalling Centre is taking longer to organise than we had hoped; we will continue to try to obtain this visit for all those that expressed a wish to do so and will give at least 3 weeks notice of any date made available to us. Please bear with us and accept our apologies for this delay. There is no need to re-register your interest.

Oxford Green Fair: Saturday 6th December 2014 at Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BX 10.30-4.30.

The branch will have a stand at this event as in past years and this year it will be a joint stand with Witney Oxford Transport. You are very welcome to come along, meet some of your committee and have a chat at this very popular fair and maybe get some of your Christmas shopping done!

Chairman's Comment.

Firstly may I thank members who contacted the Secretary with offers of advice and help, in order to put together our letter of objection to the latest attempt to build houses on the Bourne End – High Wycombe railway track bed. Also, my thanks to Nigel Phillips for pursuing this matter so diligently. This was a good example of the Branch working as a team and anyone who has anything that is concerning them please contact the Secretary or myself.

I have recently returned from the Railfuture Branches and Committees meeting in Birmingham which was a useful affair and will no doubt be reported in "Railwatch" in detail. However during the meeting I became aware that we need to remain relevant and continue to boost membership, I would like everyone to ask; should we be pursuing re-openings and development, or should we represent passengers? My thought is that we should pursue our 3 strategic causes 1) Witney 2) High Wycombe – Bourne End and 3) Wantage/ Grove, because no one else is doing it.

In 1986 the RDS as it was, was treated with contempt for suggesting re-opening the East – West line, but we were proved totally and utterly right. And I have no doubt when we are successful in our current campaigns, everyone will be wondering how we managed without them. It is my feeling that day to day issues are more the province of User Groups; by the time you read this I will have been to Islip for a meeting about timetables, organised by the local User Group.

Please let me know if you have any thoughts. I look forward to seeing some of you at the forthcoming meeting at Reading.

Cotswold Line News

Vegetation clearance is ongoing to the north of Hanborough Station and an announcement is awaited about the new loop as I write this. Parking at Kingham is now becoming a serious matter with cars parked on the B4450, some of these drivers receiving parking tickets in late September; like Hanborough we await the Franchise Extension for progress to be announced.

Freight

Work continues on the down loop at Oxford. It is understood that the A40 Road Bridge at Wolvercote will need to be replaced for the "Electric Spine" project as it does not have enough clearance. Potentially this is a very major task. Work continues rapidly for the new Banbury Road stone terminal at Water Eaton which will offer excellent freight facilities.

WITNEY OXFORD TRANSPORT GROUP (WOT)

This Railfuture supported Group is continuing with its activities and publicity campaign. A meeting has been held with David Cameron (MP for Witney) and he expressed his support for finding ways to resolve the problems of the A40. He has written to DfT and copies of their generally helpful response (albeit without a firm promise of cash!) have been circulated. Oxfordshire County Council have completed their Baseline Report. WOT had contributed much of the descriptive text relating to options – heavy rail, guided buses, tram/trains, etc. – whilst the traffic, census, route description and planning data came from OCC. The Report will now go to consultants to progress, with fuller engineering assessments of options and cost benefits. OCC have provided WOT with a project timetable, targets being public consultation on preferred option in July 2015 and funding procurement in 2017, leading to construction around 2020. We shall have to wait and see – there is a general election (or two?) before then!

To contact WOT: Web: www.witneyoxfordtransport.org.uk Facebook: www.facebook.com/witneyoxfordtransport
Post: WOT Witney Oxford Transport, 25 Pockocks Close, Bampton, OX18 2JY Twitter: @witneyoxtransp

Chiltern News

2015 Timetable Consultation

A public consultation on the draft proposed September 2015 timetable (incorporating new services to Oxford Parkway) commenced on 12th September 2014 allowing six weeks for feedback and comments from passengers and stakeholders. Closing date is 7th November.

Bicester to Oxford Parkway construction

Physical works are proceeding with noticeable progress in the area west of Bicester Town. Work is underway from six main compounds over the nine mile stretch from west of Bicester to Oxford Parkway, most spectacularly with the construction of re-located sidings for the Banbury Road stone terminal, which, when complete, will free up the site for Oxford Parkway station. The programme continues to show that construction works will be complete and signalling commissioned as far as Oxford Parkway in time for the start of the new service in September 2015. Siemens have been contracted to install the signalling to Oxford Parkway.

Platform Extensions

Work is completed on the first phase of the platform lengthening scheme at the five stations where platforms were lengthened under the HLOS capacity metric for Marylebone. The focus has now switched to the second phase of works comprising the substantial task of lengthening High Wycombe down platform to accept 9 cars that involves a new footbridge to replace the existing subway which is currently 'in the way'. This second phase of work is scheduled for completion by 31st August 2015 in time for the commencement of services to Oxford Parkway. The new Oxford route, together with additional trains and longer platforms, will provide more seats for passengers on the increasingly busy section of the Chiltern main line south of Banbury.

Class 68 Introduction

The first two Chiltern Class 68 locos, 68010 and 68011, have arrived in the UK and are undergoing fault free test running on DRS operated freight trains. The remaining four locomotives were due to arrive in the UK by the end of September. DRS are fitting the locomotives with the push pull equipment needed to operate with Chiltern's Mark 3s and DVTs. It is understood the Class 68s will replace the 67s on a phased basis, dictated by the progress of the driver training programme. Chiltern expect all Class 67s to have been phased out and replaced by Class 68s by early 2015.

New Banbury depot

Cherwell District Council have received a planning application from Network Rail/Chiltern Railways for a new train maintenance depot and sidings at Banbury. The site is south of the station on the west side of the railway, on the site of the former engine shed and will provide for more stabling capacity, light maintenance and carriage cleaning.

East West Rail Update

Parsons Brinckerhoff has been awarded a contract worth up to £8 million for the second phase of the scheme. The work includes timetable modelling, the design and alignment of track, civil engineering works to bridges and embankments, geotechnical investigation and survey works, studies on how the reinstated railway will impact on level crossings, station design, consents, ecology and environmental works.

In addition to the intermediate station at Winslow there are plans for a station at Steeple Claydon. Your Vice Chairman attended a public meeting there recently at which the general mood was that people want to see the new railway and to see progress being made. Similar public meetings are due to be held at Launton, Marsh Gibbon, Quainton and Little Kimble at all of which your committee will be represented.

High Wycombe – Bourne End

The branch has objected to a planning application for housing, which could frustrate the reopening of this line, as has one of our members and about 50 others. We also intend to write to the Secretary of State to ask for this application to be called in by his department due to the strategic importance of the route. The branch has recently made a submission to the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's Growth Fund for consultants to investigate the feasibility of this reopening particularly with consideration to the Heathrow western access project and the Princes Risborough – Milton Keynes element of EWR investments for which this short line provides a vital link.

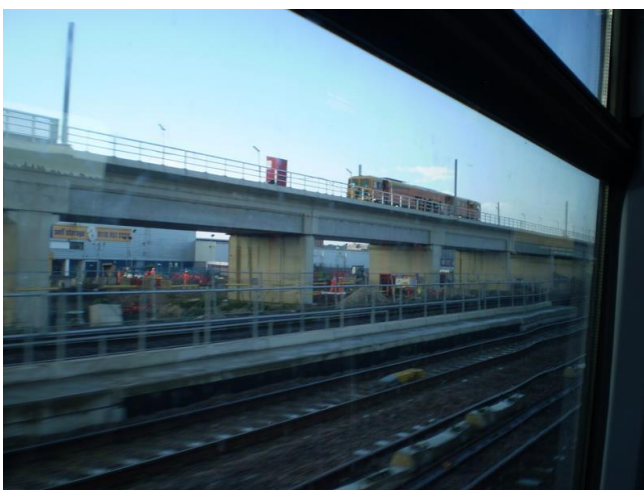
Great Western update

The DfT have announced that they intend to negotiate a direct award extension of only 3½ years to March 2019. Meanwhile work continues with electrification at numerous Thames Valley locations including the Reading flyover where track has been laid. New Crossrail sidings are in place at Maidenhead (where demolition of the roof over platform 5 has begun) and at Langley the old oil depot sidings are now in use for Crossrail engineers. Work to raise signalling equipment to flood free positions is underway between Twyford and Maidenhead.

Oxford Station masterplan

Some of the committee viewed a public display of the design concept, held in the Westgate Centre, but this was in advance of the formal consultation yet to take place. The vision has the station straddling the Botley Road with the bus station on the south side and transfer deck on the north side.

Photos:



Both: Andrew McCallum

Two views of the new Reading flyover, taken from the 0935 Banbury – Paddington on 9th October 2014 with, left, track machinery on site and masts erected and, right, a new signal gantry which was not there two days earlier!



Both: Andrew McCallum

The recently completed Didcot Parkway Station forecourt improvements looking east, left (note multi-coloured sign post behind woman in blue) and west, right. Below: looking west to the new taxi, car & bike parking areas. This design segregates buses from other traffic and solves the problem of other vehicles getting in the way of buses.



Andrew McCallum



John Elvin

Water Eaton where the new aggregates sidings are being constructed in the background to make space for the new station in the foreground, from the Banbury Road bridge.



Both: John Elvin

Bicester Town - looking towards the new station site where ground is cleared for platform construction, left, and right, looking west showing embankment rebuilding in progress.

Edited by Andrew McCallum with contributions from Richard Stow, John Elvin & Nigel Rose.